A PROCESS OF CREATING A PAINTING

A PLAN B PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Problems in Art Education

Art Education 295

Under the Direction of

Dr. Arthur E. Smith

A Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts (Plan B)

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Duluth, Minnesota

August, 1965

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PREFACE

My project is to try to develop as a painter. Painting is the major part of the project. This paper summarizes the reading and reflective thinking I did while attempting to better understand my work.

Chapter I states the purpose and importance of the paper. Chapter II is a summary of some of the most pertinent psychological research on creativity. In Chapter III I attempt to describe the thoughts and feelings I have while painting. Chapter IV is a discussion of the results of my efforts to create paintings, and Chapter V contains a summary and some conclusions.

I am grateful to the University of Minnesota, Duluth, Art Department for their policy of having nationally and internationally known artists teach summer painting workshops. The variety of views presented by these men were stimulating.

The criticism, encouragement and guidance offered by Dr. Arthur E. Smith, Head of the Department of Art, was especially valuable.

CHAPTER I

IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

A painter must, of course, be skillful at manipulating paint. But facility is not enough! The artist must also use his imagination, intuition, emotions, memories, and thoughts. These factors, used in organic conjunction with physical materials and with one another, make up the complex field which is called the creative process.

This paper contains a description of the creative process inherent in the development of a painting. I hope that the reading and reflective thinking required to write this paper will increase my understanding of how paintings evolve. There is little doubt that an increased understanding of how paintings are created will help improve my painting and teaching.

My painting will be enriched because I will be free from needlessly worrying about such questions as, What am I doing? Do I dare do this? I'm not conforming, will I be chastised? These and other problems will be resolved because I will understand the nature of the creative process.[1]

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[1] Irving A. Taylor, "The Nature of the Creative Process", Creativity, Paul Smith, editor, (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1959), p. 63.

An understanding of the creative process should also strengthen my teaching. Several prominent educators discuss the importance of this understanding.

June King McFee says that before art teachers can help develop children's creative potential they need to gain much more understanding of the creative process.[2] "They need to try to discover what kinds of experiences encourage students to develop habits and attitudes that lead to creative work."[3]

Below, a statement by the late Viktor Lowenfeld indicates that he thought art teachers should be creative and sensitive to how people think and feel.

> . . . Whatever a teacher does in stimulating creativeness greatly depends on three factors: (1) his own personality, of which his own creativeness, his degree of sensitivity, and flexible relationships to environment are an important part (2) his ability to put himself in the place of others, and (3) his understanding and knowledge of the needs of those whom he is teaching.[4]

Burton and Hefferman also believe that art teachers should be creative and understand the creative process. They listed some characteristics of creative teachers; the

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[2]June King McFee, Preparation For Art (San Francisco: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1961), p. 129.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Viktor Lowenfeld, Creative and Mental Growth (third edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 3.

most pertinent characteristics are given below:

The teacher must-

(1) Know the nature of the creative process as well as he can within the type of teacher training available.
(2) Know the type of environment, both physical and psychological, and the operations within that environment that stimulate creativity.
(3) . . . Be a curious, questioning individual, a wonderer, willing to do divergent thinking, to listen to crazy ideas.
(4) . . . Be tolerant of first clumsy efforts; . . . of inaccuracy and ambiguity; of uncertainty; of slow making of decisions.
(5) . . . Permit and encourage diversity, avoid demanding uniformity.
(6) . . . Know the literature (on creativity) which is rapidly increasing. . . . Much of the worst classroom blundering can be traced directly to unawareness of what is already known and set down in the valuable literature already existing.[5]

I strongly agree that art teachers should be creative and sensitive to how people think and feel. Teachers who have had creative experiences themselves are better able to see things from the point of view of their students as they work. Thus, it is easier for these teachers to communicate with their students.

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[5]William H. Burton and Helen Hefferman, The Step Beyond (Washington: National Education Association, 1964), pp. 22-23.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ABOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESS

I am reviewing this literature so that I will have a background which will make me better able to write about the process by which my paintings are developed. Though much of this literature is not about painting it is pertinent because the process of creating a painting, is basically the same as the process of writing a novel, composing a symphony, or doing any other kind of creative work. The studies of Guilford,[6] Beittel,[7] Brittain,[8] and others indicate the existence of this general creative process.

One of the few studies concerned specifically with the creative process in painting is that of Catherine Patrick. Patrick asked fifty artists and fifty non-artists to create paintings that were stimulated in them by reading Milton's L'Allegro. The paintings were made in their homes without time limit, but the subjects were asked to speak their

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[6] Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 4.

[7] Frank Barron, "The Psychology of Imagination", Scientific American, 1CC (September, 1958), 161.

[8] Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 4.

thoughts as they worked. The answers to questionnaires and interviews with the artists indicated that their work was about the same as when they worked in private. Record was kept of everything that was said. Although the artists' paintings were judged to be of significantly better quality (as evaluated by artist judges), and although they showed greater imagination and a wider range of associations, Patrick found that both groups gave evidence of four stages of the creative process; a finding that corroborates Patrick's work with poets and non-poets.[9]

Wallas was the first to discover these four basic stages of the creative process. He found these stages by examining the thought processes reported by distinguished mathematicians, scientists, technicians, inventors, and artists and by comparing these with his own thought processes in the social sciences. Wallas called these four stages preparation, incubation, illumination, and elaboration.[10]

Various writers use different names for these stages. Some call them gathering and selecting of impressions, revision and recombination, flash of insight, and expression

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[9]Catherine Patrick, "Creative Thought in Artists", Journal of Psychology, IV (January, 1937), 70.

[10]Taylor, op. cit., pp. 61-66.

of the result;[11] others refer to them as sensitiveness, incubation, insight, and production,[12] or, universalization, neutralization, manifestation, and organization.[13] Regardless of the terms used, the writers describe the creative process in about the same way.

The four phases of the creative process should not be interpreted as a formula. Wallas himself suggested that the pattern of creating is seldom a clearcut series of steps.[14] The stages interact and overlap and do not necessarily follow an orderly progression. They are just a convenient method for describing a complex process.

I will use Wallas's term, preparation, for the first phase of the creative process. During the preparatory phase, the individual collects raw materials from his environment; he prepares to create.

According to Burton and Hefferman, preparation is a

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[11]J. K. Feibleman, "The Psychology of the Artist", Journal of Psychology, XIX (March, 1945), 165-89.

[12]Barbara Biber, "Premature Structuring as a Deterrent to Creativity", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XIX (April, 1939), 282.

[13]William E. Born, "Unconscious Processes in Artistic Creation", Journal of Clinical Psychopathology and Psychotherapy, VII (October, 1945), 258-60.

[14]Taylor, op. cit., p. 64.

prerequisite for any worthwhile creation.[15] They say that there are two kinds of preparation; general and specific. General preparation includes the total experiences of the individual to date; it is long, continued, and incidental to any specific creative experience. Specific preparation differs in that it is more brief, more crowded, and more deliberately exploratory.[16] The purpose of either kind of preparation is to form a background from which to create.

Feibleman says that artists' backgrounds are richer than the backgrounds of most people because artists are more sensitive to their environment.[17] He adds that artists become excited by what exists in their environment and go on to suppose what could exist and respond to it.[18]

Taylor discusses the differences in the ways in which non-creative and creative individuals use their experiences to develop their backgrounds. According to Taylor, the non-creative individual absorbs only the simplest experiences,

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[15] William H. Burton, and Helen Hefferman, The Step Beyond (Washington: National Education Association, 1964), p. 26.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Feibleman, op. cit., p. 166.

[18] Ibid.

those that are easy to categorize.[19]

In contrast to this, the creative person absorbs any and all experiences without conscious awareness of how useful they might be or without need to categorize them into preconceived notions. Thus, the creative person has a chance to combine his experiences into a new form or organization.[20]

The second phase of the creative process is frequently called incubation. Taylor says that during the incubation phase experiences mill and flow freely about for the highly creative person without becoming stereotyped, even though the creative person knows of these stereotypes.[21]

Portnoy,[22] Feibleman,[23] Born[24] and others state that this second phase is mostly unconscious. Taylor adds that it is also uncomfortable.[25]

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[19]Taylor, op. cit., p. 62.

[20]Ibid. p. 65.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Julius Portnoy, "A Psychological Theory of Artistic Creation", American Psychologist, IV (April, 1949), 266.

[23]Feibleman, op. cit., p. 166.

[24]Born, op. cit., 258.

[25]Taylor, op. cit., p. 64.

The same authors agree that during this second phase the mentally undigested parts begin fitting together into new relationships. This uniting of the parts requires varying periods of time. It usually takes longer to meaningfully unite a larger number of free parts, but the creative achievement may be greater.[26]

Incubation is followed by illumination. The illumination phase is usually short; sometimes it lasts only a moment.

Taylor[27] and Burton[28] say that the inner mechanism of illumination is unknown, but the overt manifestation is obvious; "Eureka!" or, "I've got it!" Although psychologists do not know exactly why or how illumination occurs, they do know that it will not come without preparation or incubation nor in an unfavorable social and psychological climate.[29]

The final phase of the creative process, sometimes called execution, involves the difficult task of giving objective being to implicit experiences. Usually a great deal of changing preceeds the actual execution.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Burton, op. cit., p. 27.

[29] Ibid.

Facility is important in this final phase. Taylor says that many highly creative insights are not translated into objective form because the would-be creator lacks the necessary communicating skills. The medium of communication itself largely determines and frequently modifies the original illumination.[30]

With the aid of this general background, I will do some reflective thinking about my reading and painting experiences and attempt to describe the process by which I create paintings.

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[30]Taylor, op. cit., p. 66.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PAINTING

Of course, while I am painting I am not conscious of the many factors that will be discussed in this chapter. It would be impossible to paint while thinking about this complex process.

Only after I am through with a painting am I able to look back and become somewhat aware of the process by which that painting evolved. Some parts of the process can never be completely described because they either do not reach the level of consciousness or else they involve emotions which cannot be translated into words.

The creative process to be described in this chapter should not be interpreted as a formula or as the way in which I paint. Instead, it should be regarded as a general process which is similar to that by which many of my paintings are developed. There is no one way in which all paintings evolve; each has its own unique development.

As was suggested in the preceeding chapter, the artist must have a background from which to create. For me this background is nature. My paintings are inspired by natural objects for which I feel a close affinity.

My best paintings relate to my deepest feelings. I cannot imagine painting without a strong emotion. Surely the result would be indifferent.

Here, in Northeastern Minnesota there is an abundance of the kind of things that appeal to me. I love the hills, mines, lakes, swamps, forests, and all the natural beauty that can be found in these places.

In my home there are bits of weathered wood, stones, chunks of iron ore, butterflies, and other incidental objects whose shape, color, or texture have attracted me enough to bring them into the house.

I revere these fragments of nature. Holding and observing them arouses in me a vague unverbalizable compulsion to paint. The close examination of these small elements of nature is my specific preparation for painting.

Being primarily a painter of mood, I do not make preliminary sketches or mental layouts. I want to use my emotions for painting, not for preparing. I must begin painting right away before I cool off.

When I start applying paint to the canvas the incubation phase of the creative process begins. There are no rules or set formulas. There is nothing in particular which I seek to do. By allowing things to happen, taking

advantage of so-called accidents that please me, and feeling my way along, I am able to maintain a feeling of spontaneity and create a larger number of possibilities to develop.

The early development of a painting is mysteriously effortless. There is no problem of getting the right color beforehand because I do not know what I want until I see it on the canvas. Frequently I mix the paints directly on the canvas rather than on a palette.

I paint freely and rapidly so that the paint seems to flow by itself. Although the first shapes and colors that I paint look as though they just happened, they resemble the object that inspired me.

The suggestiveness of these supple shapes releases a chain of ideas from which the painting will evolve. Each change or new step in the evolution of the painting suggests new possibilities for development. Instead of clinging to and trying to imitate the fragment of nature which originally moved me, I will work on one of these new ideas.

As I paint I begin to see an idea which I think I might like to develop. It is not a complete pattern, but its indistinct parts emerge here and there. I do not force this idea. I just let it agitate my imagination and, more or less, determine its own development.

As more paint is applied illumination begins to take place; my idea becomes more clear, and I start to see and feel how the forms might be brought to completion through something like an organic growth. There begins to emerge a form, a spirit, a direction. The canvas comes to life and casts a spell over me so that I seem to become one with the painting.

Then begins the long phase of execution. To avoid losing the illumination or direction, I quickly stress the significant forms and eliminate those which do not strengthen the main idea. As I continue working, my feelings, my thoughts, and my painting start to become more ordered.

I keep working over the entire canvas adjusting colors, tones, shapes, and textures. I add new shapes and destroy some of the existing ones. There is a continual push and pull of the entire surface.

Because of the plasticity of my painting, there is much room for experimenting. Anything goes that I think might help the painting. I will use any paint, any material, any technique. I often try crazy things and sometimes they bring good results.

The exact outcomes of my experimenting are somewhat unpredictable. There are always unforseen consequences. When these unforseen consequences are in favor of the main

idea of the painting, they quicken my perceptions, free my imagination, and produce a deeper involvement which allows me to uncover new patterns and new ways of developing the painting.

Despite its plasticity there is a point beyond which my idea will not stretch without losing its nature. Sometimes I fail to hold my imagination within this limit. Other ideas interfere and cause me to lose the original one.

When this happens I have a struggle on my hands. The first thing I must do is determine exactly where the painting started going wrong. Next, I must rework the painting to make it as it was before it reached that point. Then I can start again from there, as if what had been done since then had never existed.

It takes every resource at my command (the experiences of previous painting, skill in techniques, knowledge, faith, and persistence) to restore the painting's life. But without fresh insight techniques are useless. Qualities of craft and understanding are of value only in so far as they aid the creative process. If they are relied upon too much, they prevent spontaneous developments.

Usually, the desired development must be waited for.

In my earlier painting experiences I spent much useless effort trying to push paintings to completion by sheer force of will.

Morris Kantor did me the favor of telling me about the fruitlessness of this procedure. He said that if I did not know what to do I should stop working on the painting and finish it some other time. Will belongs to the conscious life only. It cannot help to move in directions not yet discovered. It hampers undetermined development by laying the emphasis upon whatever is in the conscious mind.[31]

The understandings I acquired by talking with Morris Kantor gave me confidence. I am no longer afraid to make changes in paintings because I know that each painting has its own life.[32] If I maintain contact with and nourish that life, the painting will come out well.

I like to stop working on a painting while it is still fluid and moving; while it is still alive. It is difficult to say exactly how I know when to quit. It is something I sense. There comes a time when all the parts of the paint-

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[31] Brewster Ghiselin (comp.), The Creative Process (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), p. 16.

[32] Graham Collier, Form, Space, and Vision (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 211.

ing find their definitive relation. Every part seems to naturally join every other part. The shapes, tones, textures, painting method, and mood have become unified so that a sense of completeness prevails. The form that was once a vague, incomplete image is now whole and living in the completed canvas. The spirit of the object that motivated me exists in paint. For the time being, I see nothing more to do.

The painting is then put aside. After several days I look at it again. Sometimes on coming back to a painting after a few days I find that it is not so full and rich, but looks smaller, weaker, and thinner than it did earlier. When this happens I work on the painting some more.

At other times a painting which has cooled off for awhile looks even better to me than it did right after I stopped working on it. Paintings which have this effect are signed and framed.

After completing a painting, I find in it a degree of visual communication to myself. I discover many subtleties which I was not aware of during the time of creation. Though I did not knowingly set out to capture spirit, the completed painting has a spirit similar to that of the object that motivated me. This spirit is characterized by

a mysterious inner life of wholeness, unity, and order.

This does not mean that I clearly understand the painting. To me a painting is at first quite unknown. After awhile I begin to see some of the physical reasons why the painting is ordered and complete, and I discover subtle textures, tones, lines, and relationships of forms which I was not aware of during the time of creation.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMPLETED PAINTINGS

I prefer to present my paintings without much explanation. The following quotations express my opinions on verbalizing about paintings.

> Renoir once remarked, "If you can explain a painting, it isn't a work of art." For in the end what makes a great work of art great is always something of a mystery.[33]

> In every work of art there is something which fixes its degree of goodness or badness; and which eludes description in words . . . .[34]

> There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible . . . qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence.[35]

> "A painting is its own comment. Its only interpretation is to the eye. It is enough to look, see and gain pleasure by that sense."[36] (Carlyle Brown)

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[33]Alfred H. Barr Jr., What Is Modern Painting? (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1956), p. 44.

[34]Albert C. Barnes, The Art In Painting (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1925), p. 68.

[35]John Dewey, Art As Experience (New York: Minton, Balch and Company, 1934), p. 74.

[36]Nathaniel Pousette-Dart (ed.), American Painting Today (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1956), p. 63.

> . . . Only one question should be asked: Does the painter give with the motion of his brush, with color, black and white contrasts, a unique visual experience no matter how much or how little of it can be put into words. This is the only valid testimony.[37]

The aim of this part of the paper is not to explain my paintings, for they cannot be explained; they must speak for themselves. The purpose is more to help the viewer discover the visual messages which the paintings contain.

Some painters claim that they do not care if their paintings communicate to anyone. I do not feel this way. Though I am not concerned with communication while I am painting, after I am through I like to think that there is a communication from my work. It does not matter whether everyone approves of my efforts, but it pleases me if my work moves those who think and feel as I do.

With the belief that the first results of creative effort are seldom the best, I explore and express each idea as fully as possible. Sometimes many paintings are needed to fully realize an idea; at other times, only a few are necessary.

All of the paintings become part of a sequence, part of a total. No painting is completely separated from the

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[37]L. Moholy-Nagy, Vision In Motion (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), p. 134.

others that came before or that may come after. Each painting is developed in its own way; yet the continuation, the process, envelopes all of them.

This idea of working in series was acquired from Boris Margo. I had just completed a painting which contained a part that I liked very much. Mr. Margo suggested that I try a painting of just that part. I followed his suggestion. The resultant painting did not end up looking like the part that inspired me, but somehow it had the same spirit. This second painting, in turn, inspired a third, and so on. My paintings have been developed in series ever since.

Ageronia Series[38]

My first series of paintings is called the Ageronia series because it was inspired by a butterfly of the Ageronia phylum.

It is especially difficult to write anything about this series which makes sense because these are not logical paintings. They were created by almost pure instinct. These paintings contain so many contradictions that my first writings about them made them sound like compromises.

The contradictions exist because I captured the

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[38]Figures 1-4, pp. 41-2.

delicate, fleighty beauty of the butterfly in fairly bold and powerful paintings. The paintings are neither active nor static. They are restful and pleasing, yet full of interior life. Thin, flat subdued colors are used, but they are lively, and they merge into the organic shapes of the designs.

Ageronia #4.[39] Ageronia #4 most effectively caught the essence of the butterfly. Paint is applied sparingly. Thin dark lines and translucent areas give a delicacy and lightness of weight which make areas of the painting seem capable of fluttering. Curved and circular shapes add to the activity.

Arch-like shapes help hold the floating areas in place and increase the balance, variety, and strength of the painting. Together, the strong subtle arches, the subdued colors, and the general vertical lines stabilize and strengthen the design.

The mood expressed by this painting cannot be duplicated with words.

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[39]Figure 4, p. 42.

A. M. Series[40]

The left side of Ageronia #1 stimulated the A. M. series. The paintings in this series seemed to come about in a natural way. It was not necessary to invent any theme; the shapes and colors seemed to appear by themselves.

One A. M.[41] One A. M. is the most successful painting in this series. It looks very spontaneous because it was completed in a hurry while my emotions were aroused about a portion of Ageronia #1. Its fluid and indistinct shapes look fresh and wet. They suggest that there is more going on than meets the eye. Rather than tell everything, they invite the observer to draw upon his own memory and imagination.

Victoria[42]

Victoria was completed in a relatively short time. After its completion, I needed quite a while to get to know it. What at first seemed drab and unorganized later

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[40] Figures 5-7, pp. 43-4.

[41] Figure 5, p. 43.

[42] Figure 8, p. 44.

became full of life, free, and well designed. Its free execution gives it excitement while the subdued colors quiet it down and unify it.

Images Series[43]

The middle of Ageronia #1 inspired this series. These paintings are ambiguous and suggestive so that the viewer has to enter in. Many people see two figures in these paintings. I did not intend to paint figures, but if they want to see figures let them. Because of the largely subconscious way in which I work, it is not surprising that others see things in a painting which I, in my one-sided passion of creation, am not aware of.

Images #1.[44] Like most of my work, Images #1 is very free, yet ordered. Its order was arrived at subconsciously.

Images #2.[45] Though Images #2 does not look quite as free as Images #1, it also evolved primarily subconsciously. After applying some paint and scraping it down, I saw the shapes in the canvas. They were not quite as definite as we

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[43]Figures 9-11, pp. 45-6.

[44]Figure 9, p. 45.

[45]Figure 10, p. 45.

normally see things, but there was no doubt about them being there. All I had to do was take a rag and wipe the paint off them so they could be more easily distinguished.

Images #3.[46] The shapes in Images #3 are similar to those of the earlier paintings in this series. In many ways, however, this painting is different. Its development required more struggle than the earlier paintings because I thought more about it. I still took advantage of accidents and free associations, but my mind and hand were a little more consciously controlled.

Images #3 is better designed and looks more finished than Images #1 or Images #2. Even though it is very abstracted from the original butterfly, it still has the butterfly's spirit. It seems that regardless of how much I abstract a painting it still keeps the feeling and mood of the fragment of nature which inspired its development.

Image.[47] Image came from the right side of Images #1, and evolved much like Images #2. Its thin paint which

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[46]Figure 11, p. 46.

[47]Figure 12, p. 46.

varies from transparent to opaque helps impart the feeling of the delicacy of the butterfly. The somber browns and general vertical direction give the painting a feeling of peace and stability. I believe the combination of these qualities helps capture the spirit of nature's mysterious quietude and far-off aloofness.

Formation[48]

Formation was inspired by a chunk of iron ore. It does not look like the ore, but it has the ore's feeling. The feeling is one of powerful inner beauty and of quiet, genuine strength.

The colors are like those one would get if he scooped up a shovelful of iron ore. No other colors would be right for this painting.

Beginning Series[49]

The Beginning series was inspired by a butterfly. To me these paintings suggest a beginning of life.

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[48]Figure 13, p. 47.

[49]Figures 14-15, pp. 47-8.

Beginning #1.[50] The right side of Beginning #1 reminds me of a cacoon. The shape on the left side is coming to life; it is emerging from its cacoon and from darkness.

Beginning #2.[51] Beginning #2 came from the right side of Beginning #1. Beginning #2 moves from the rough dark earth on its right side to a light, airy spiritual feeling on its left side. I think it conveys an intense but deep and restrained feeling for the earth and for the mystery of life.

Gradation[52]

Gradation is a common form of natural order. At dawn the earth is dim. It gradually increases in brightness until it reaches its full intensity; then the brightness gradates into darkness. A clear sky changes from a light warmish blue at its horizon, to a cold dark blue at its zenith. There is gradation in the passage of the seasons and in the flowing pattern of plant and animal life through its transitory stages from birth to death. All natural

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[50]Figure 14, p. 47.

[51]Figure 15, p. 48.

[52]Figure 16, p. 48.

cycles illustrate gradation.

Gradation interests me because it implies change, movement, and life; and I find it mysterious. In the painting, Gradation, shapes change from black and ochre to grays and lighter ochres until they melt into their white background. There are no sharp contrasts of line, color, or lighting; and yet the shapes are distinct.

Textured Forms Series[53]

One of the principles of nature is that a few forms and a few colors are sufficient for the creation of an object. This principle is also applicable to art.

The paintings in the Textured Forms series present a few forms in a definite relationship. Because these are simple paintings, I had to utilize every element to the utmost.

Textures are a very important and integral part of these paintings. Rough sandy textures in the forms complement the smooth shiny textures of the backgrounds. The textures enhance the colors, "capitalize on the sensitive

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[53]Figures 17-18, p. 49.

relationship between sight and touch," and give the forms a surface so that they are more convincing, more interesting, more satisfying, and more prominent.[54]

These paintings possess many subtleties. There are no adequate terms for describing the subtle textures, subtle relationships of shapes, and subtle tones of the paintings in this series.

Root Series[55]

A large tree stump stood near the edge of a lake. The lake had worn the soil away from the roots, and man had shortened the roots with a saw. Sun and water bleached the roots to beautiful tones of warm whites and grays. This setting inspired me to paint the Root series.

Most of the root paintings are richer than my earlier paintings because thin colors are laid upon one another causing enamel-like surfaces to appear. The colors are slightly brighter, but they are not loud. The best of these paintings has a rich glowing effect.

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[54]Graham Collier, Form, Space, and Vision (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 122.

[55]Figures 19-22, pp. 50-1.

From Ageronia[56]

From Ageronia was developed from shapes of the Ageronia series. The center of this painting has strong, definite shapes; but as one approaches the edges of the painting, the shapes become lighter in tone and less distinct. They seem to fade into space rather than abruptly end at the edge of the canvas. The first impression is that the colors are few and simple, but many subtle tones and textures become apparent as the painting is observed more carefully.

Skeleton[57]

Skeleton was inspired by a Cecropia Moth. This painting depicts the structure and the spirit of the moth.

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[56]Figure 23, p. 52.

[57]Figure 24, p. 52.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

My paper is primarily concerned with the inner materials with which the painter works - imagination, intuition, emotions, memories, and thoughts. These inner materials used in organic conjunction with physical materials and with one another make up the complex field which is known as the creative process.

To facilitate discussion, the creative process is described as consisting of four phases. Various writers use different names for these phases, but they all describe the process in about the same way.

The first phase is commonly called preparation. During the preparatory phase the artist collects materials from his environment to form a background from which he will create.

The second phase is frequently called incubation. This phase is largely unconscious and consists of rearranging the mentally undigested parts into new relationships.

Incubation is followed by illumination. The inner mechanism of illumination is unknown, but the outward reaction is the obvious "Eureka!" or, "I've got it!"

The final phase, often called execution, involves the difficult task of communicating the inner experiences, giving them objective being. Many highly creative ideas die at this phase because the would-be creator lacks the necessary communicating skills.

In Chapter III, I attempt to describe the unique process by which my paintings are developed. This is an incomplete description because much of the process either occurs below the level of consciousness or else involves emotions which cannot be wholly described with words.

Before I can paint, I must have strong feelings about something. Usually my feelings are aroused by some small element of nature whose shape, color, or texture appeals to me.

Because of the emotional nature of my paintings, it is best for me to begin working as soon as possible. I do not make preliminary sketches or mental layouts because I fear that I might cool-off during the time it would take to perform these tasks.

I start with a large brush and work easily and rapidly. Then, I gradually begin to see things in the canvas; the painting starts to come to life. The life in the canvas begins to cast a spell over me, and I get so involved with the painting that I seem to become a part of it.

I keep painting until the shapes, colors, textures, idea, and technique become satisfactorily related; until the painting becomes a harmonious whole and seems to acquire the spirit of the fragment of nature which motivated me.

When all elements seem satisfactorily related, the painting is put aside. After several days, I look at the painting again. If what I see satisfies me, I sign it and frame it. If I am not satisfied, I work on the painting some more.

Frequently one successful painting or a part of one will suggest another. It is not unusual for one painting to provide ideas for ten others. Generally, the last paintings of a series are richer and more complete than the first ones.

Most of my paintings look strong, yet unimposing. I believe they have the quiet brooding strength of nature; rather than shout for attention, they stay on the wall in a dignified manner.

Generally, my canvases give a feeling of a predominant color; the earlier ones carry as brown paintings, the latest ones have a green feeling. The colors result from natural taste or inclination rather than from conscious or intellectual choice. It seems as though each painting naturally acquired the only color which is right for it.

A wonderful opportunity for me to evaluate my work was provided by my one man show at Tweed Gallery. By seeing all of my paintings together, the unity and wholeness of my efforts became obvious. No painting was completely separated from the others. Each painting was part of a sequence, yet each had its own development.

By studying the paintings in relation to one another, I was able to see how I had grown from the experience of solving problems in certain paintings. There was evidence of a continual subtler handling of colors, of a greater richness, of new textural nuances, and of a growing sensitivity to nature.

It also became obvious that some of the later paintings had two main weaknesses: (1) They were done too carefully. (2) The forms were becoming too bold for the subtlety of the colors.

In the paintings completed since my show, these problems appear to be solved. These later paintings are more free, their colors and values are more varied, and there are a greater number of simpler, smaller, and more interesting shapes.

At present, I am very interested in shapes, tones, and textures. In my quest for greater textural variety, I often

glue things to the canvas and mix sand with my paint.

Perhaps, the most significant benefits derived from my project are those which cannot be fully described with words: the sensitivities which have enriched my painting, my teaching, and my life.

My painting is enriched because I have learned to emotionally identify myself with the creative process. I seem to have become a part of each painting I work on, and I am more sensitive to paint and other materials. In fact, I have become more aware of my entire environment. I have learned to more quickly adjust to new experiences and to use them for new adventures in painting and teaching.

Another important result of this project is that I have learned to more closely identify with each student as he creates. I have learned to see things from the student's point of view and be sensitive to his needs.

Yet, this certainly is not the end of my growth; it is only part of a process that will probably continue as long as I live. I cannot say where I will go from here because I am not sure. I only know that I must go on experiencing my environment: looking, feeling, and reacting.

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APPENDIX A

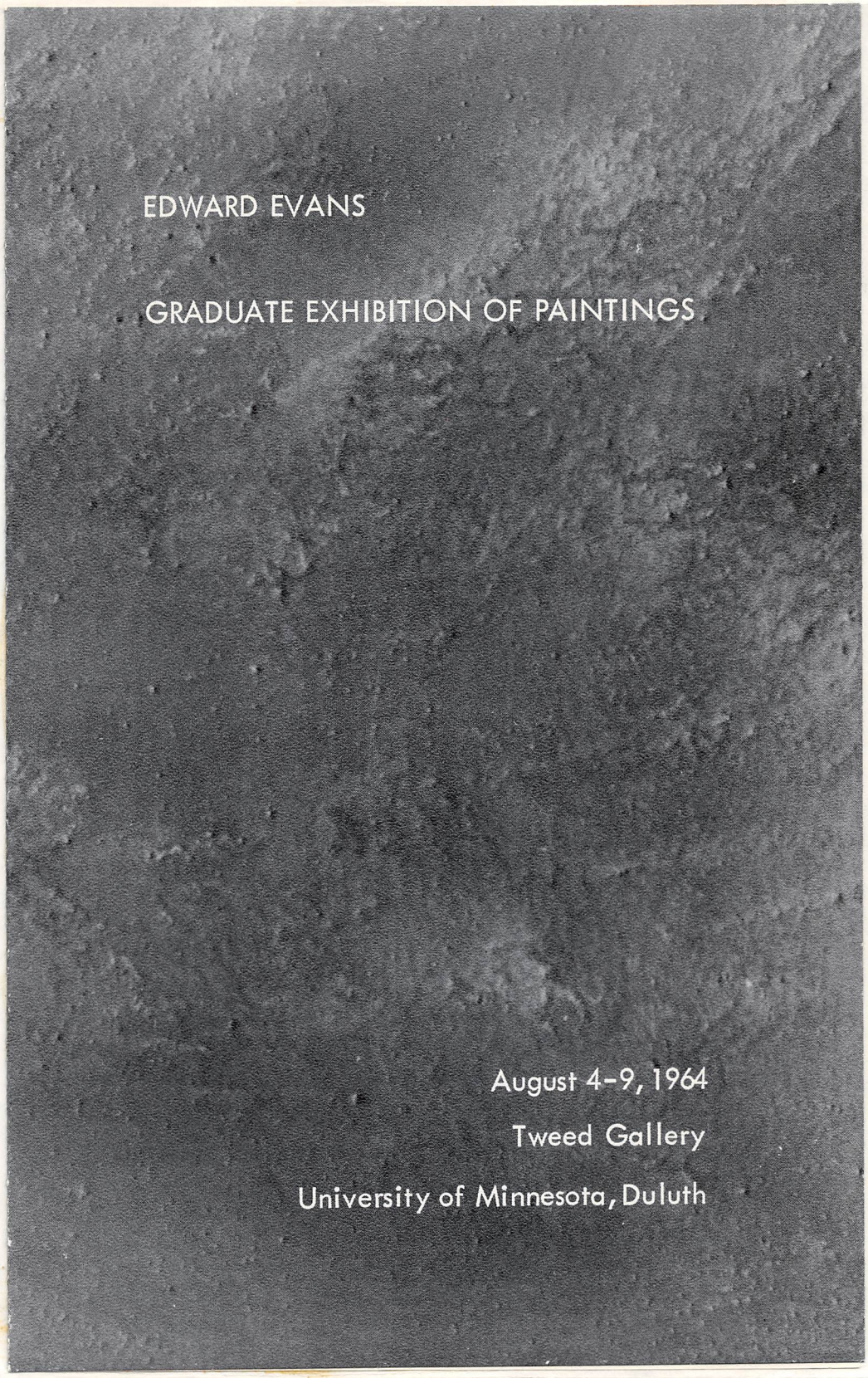
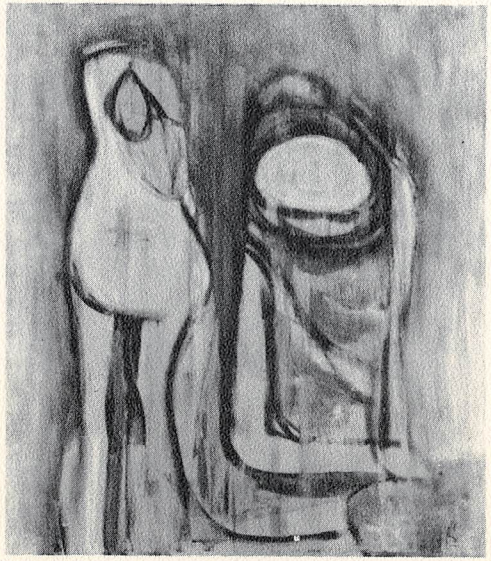


FIGURE I

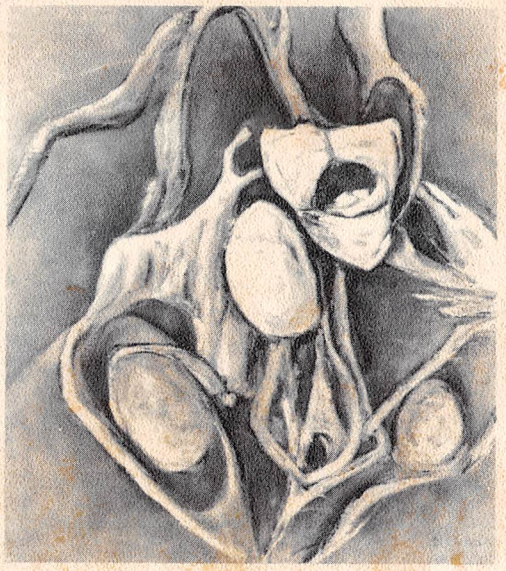
CATALOGUE

Painting is my way of honoring nature.
The paintings in this exhibition are transfigurations of butterflies, chunks of iron ore and tree roots. These paintings do not imitate the outward appearances of the fragments of nature which stimulated their development. Instead, I believe, they possess the spirit of nature – a mysterious inner life of wholeness, unity and order.

EDWARD EVANS



Images #3



Root #2

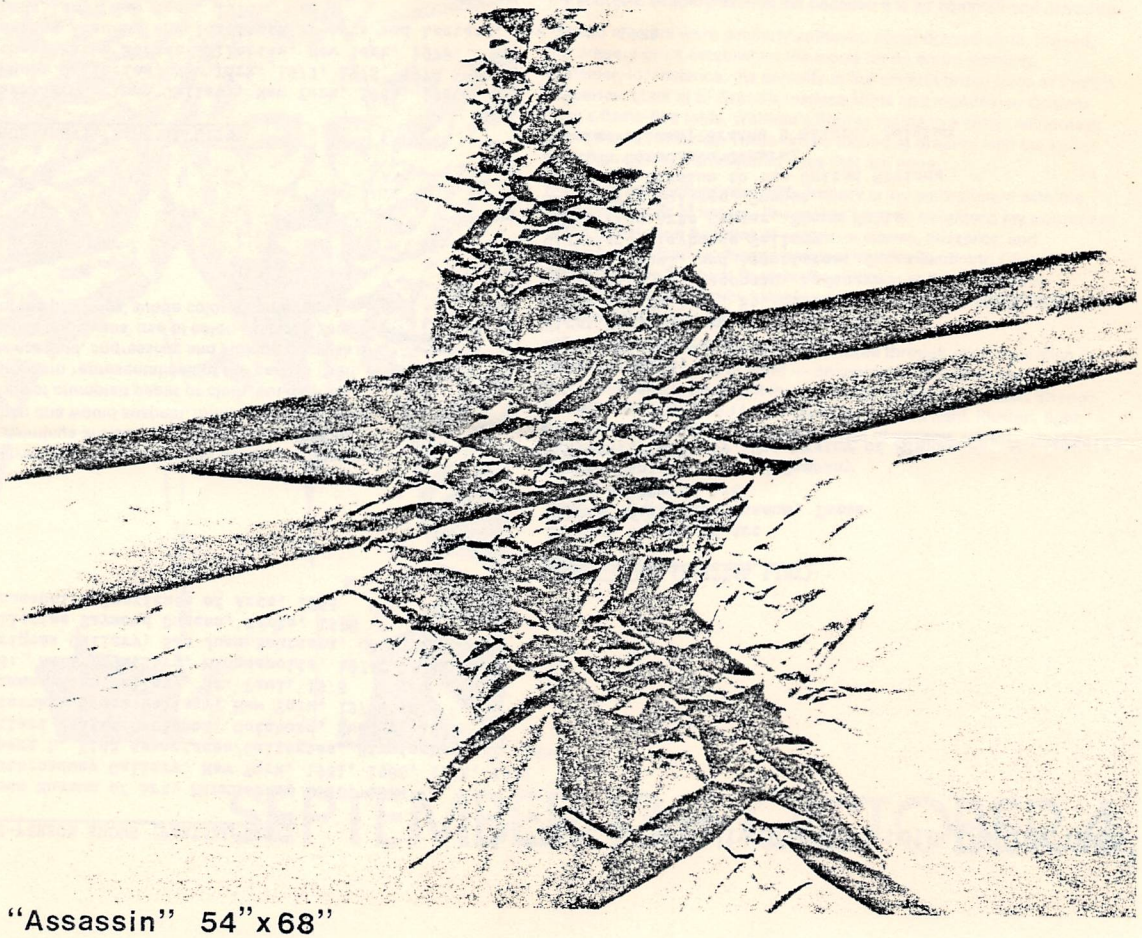
CATALOGUE

1.	AGERONIA #1	1962	36 x 48	NFS
	(Loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Habel, Chicago, Illinois)			
2.	AGERONIA #2	1962	32 1/2 x 49	$40
3.	AGERONIA #3	1962	48 1/2 x 60	$40
4.	AGERONIA #4	1962	49 x 65	$215
5.	ONE A.M.	1962	48 x 30	$70
6.	TWO A.M.	1962	50 x 37	$40
7.	THREE A.M.	1962	53 x 37	NFS
	(Loaned by Mr. and Mrs. William Nicklay, St. Louis Park, Minn.)			
8.	VICTORIA	1962	28 1/2 x 60	$70
9.	IMAGES #1	1962	48 x 42	$70
10.	IMAGES #2	1963	54 x 49	$40
11.	IMAGES #3	1963	48 x 42	$100
12.	IMAGE	1963	56 1/2 x 34	$100
13.	FORMATION	1963	60 x 48	$100
14.	BEGINNING #1	1963	48 x 36	$40
15.	BEGINNING #2	1963	42 x 48	$100
16.	GRADATION	1963	36 x 48	$40
17.	TEXTURED FORMS #1	1963	48 x 60	$120
18.	TEXTURED FORMS #2	1963	36 x 48	$40
19.	ROOT #2	1964	48 x 42	$180
20.	ROOT #3	1964	52 x 48	$100
21.	ROOT #4	1964	46 x 38	$40
22.	ROOT #5	1964	48 x 37 1/2	$70
23.	FROM AGERONIA	1964	48 x 59	$120
24.	SKELETON	1964	49 x 40	$70

EDWARD EVANS

TWEED MUSEUM of ART University MN Duluth

PAINTINGS



"Assassin" 54"x68"

APPENDIX B

FIGURE 1

AGERONIA #1

FIGURE 2

AGERONIA #2

FIGURE 3

AGERONIA #3

FIGURE 4

AGERONIA #4

FIGURE 5

ONE A. M.

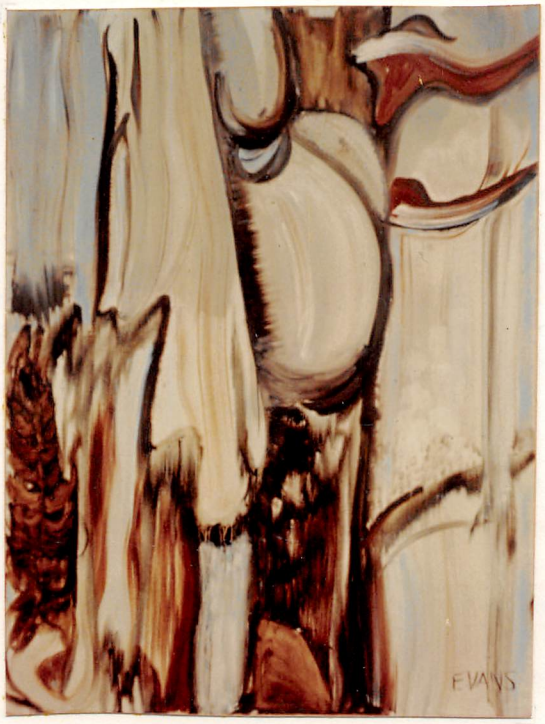


FIGURE 6

TWO A. M.

FIGURE 7

THREE A. M.

FIGURE 8

VICTORIA

FIGURE 9

IMAGES #1

FIGURE 10

IMAGES #2

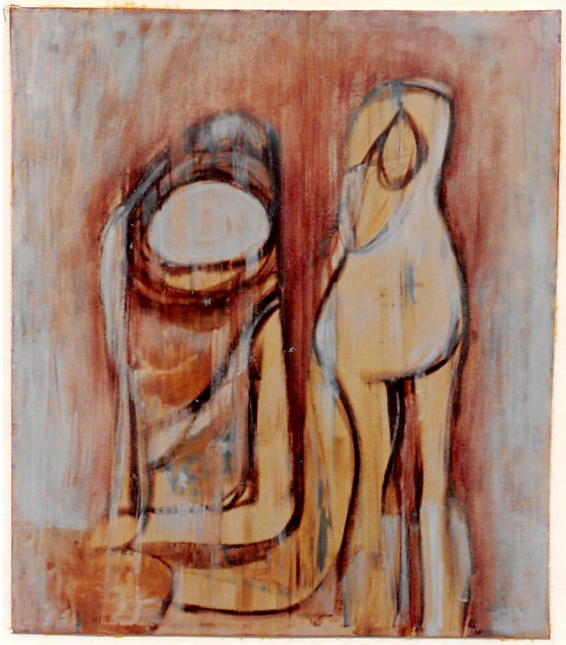


FIGURE 11

IMAGES #3

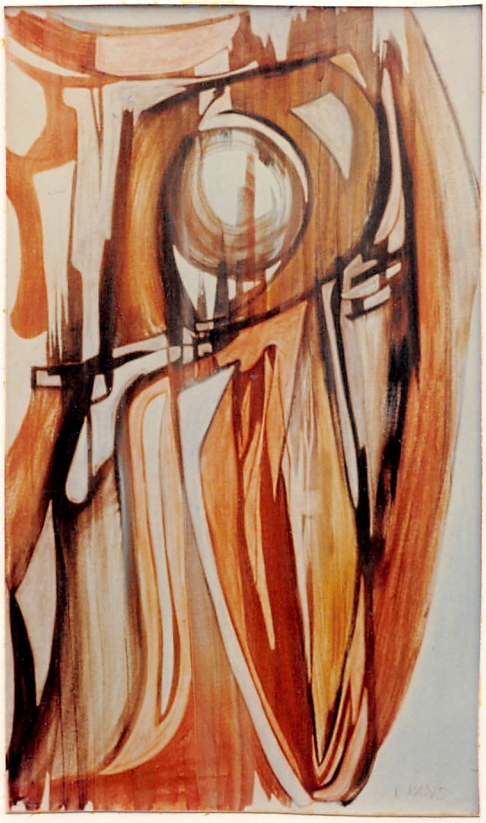


FIGURE 12

IMAGE

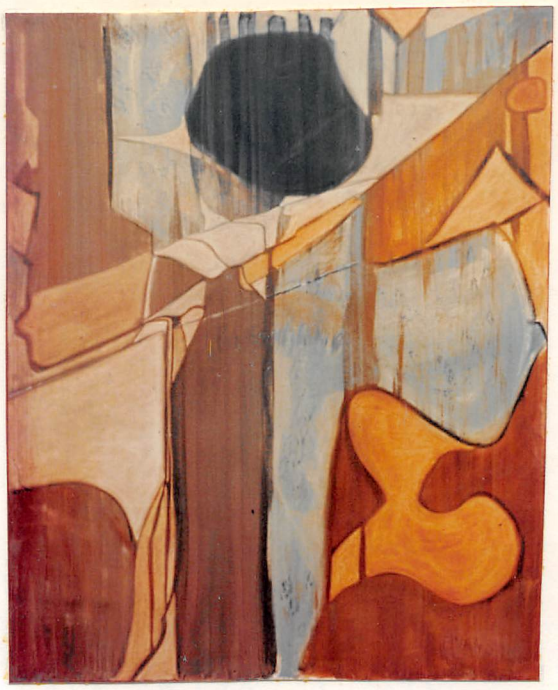


FIGURE 13

FORMATION

FIGURE 14

BEGINNING #1

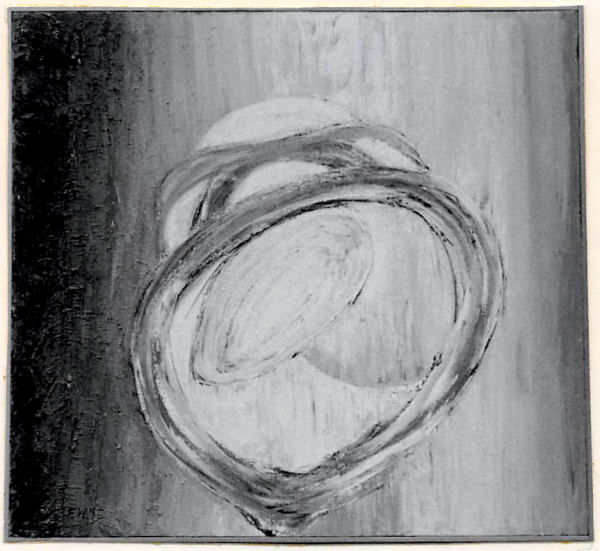


FIGURE 15

BEGINNING #2

FIGURE 16

GRADATION

FIGURE 17

TEXTURED FORMS #1

FIGURE 18

TEXTURED FORMS #2

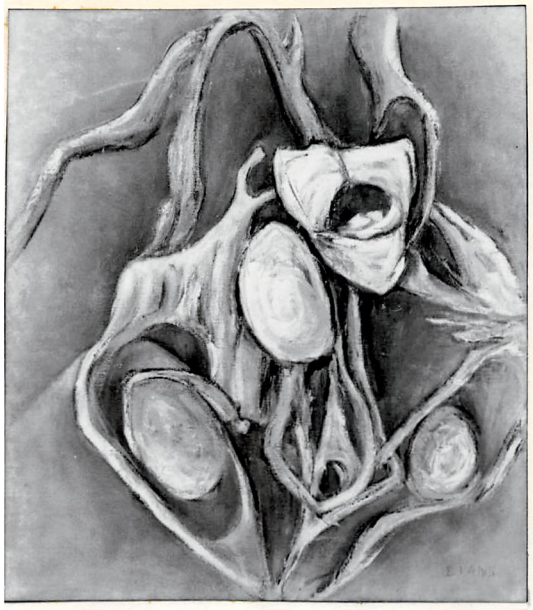


FIGURE 19

ROOT #2

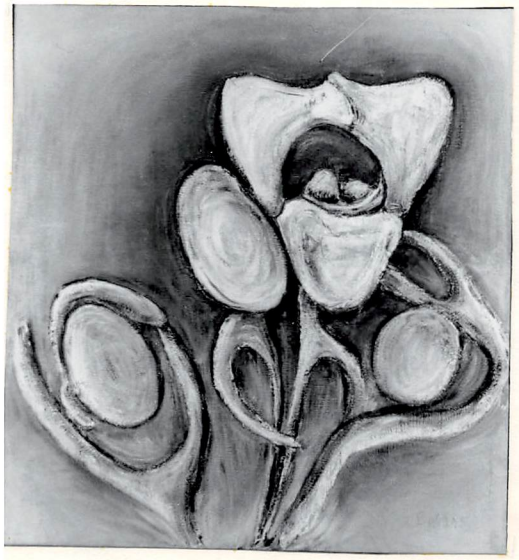


FIGURE 20

ROOT #3

FIGURE 21

ROOT #4

FIGURE 22

ROOT #5

FIGURE 23

FROM AGERONIA

FIGURE 24

SKELETON